

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 099987 TOSEC 040140
ORIGIN SS-15

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DRAFTED BY S/S-O:TGMARTIN

APPROVED BY S/S-O:TGMARTIN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 099987 TOSEC 040140

FOL RPT PANAMA 2683 ACTION SECSTATE INFO PANCANAL USCINCSO
19 APR 78 QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2683

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, PN

SUBJECT: EMBASSY COMMENT ON TORRIJOS PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: PANAMA 2682

1. THIS CABLE COMMENTS ON THE TORRIJOS PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTED
REFTEL.

2. TORRIJOS' TALK ABOUT DESTROYING THE CANAL IS OBVIOUSLY
EXTREMELY UNFORTUNATE FROM OUR STANDPOINT. FROM THE PANAMANIAN
STANDPOINT IT IS NEITHER SURPRISING NOR VERY MEANINGFUL.
TORRIJOS HAS BEEN UNDER CONSIDERABLE STRESS FOR MONTHS. HE HAS
HAD TO LISTEN TO DOZENS OF FOREIGNERS TELL HIM HOW TO RUN
HIS COUNTRY -- MOST OF WHOM HAD NEVER SET FOOT IN IT BEFORE
THEY WERE READY WITH THEIR ADVICE, WHICH OFTEN APPEARED TO BE
LITTLE LESS THAN BLACKMAIL TO HIM. HE HAS BEEN FORCED WITHIN
HIMSELF, WHERE HE HAS DOUBTLESS BEEN NURSING HIS ANGUISH, WHICH
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IS COMPOUNDED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IN ACCEPTING DECONCINI,
EVEN AS ATTENUATED BY THE LEADERSHIP AMENDMENT, HE HAS
BEEN SKATING ON THIN POLITICAL ICE, BUT HE HAS HAD TO ACCEPT
THE TREATY ANYWAY FOR ECONOMIC REASONS. FURTHERMORE, HIS IS NOT
OUT OF THE WOODS POLITICALLY. THERE ARE TROUBLESOME SECTORS
HERE WHO WILL TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY UNFAVORABLE ASPECT OF THE
TREATY, AND HE DOESN'T LIKE IT. THE OUTBURST IS NOT VERY

MEANINGFUL BECAUSE IT REPRESENTS AN EMOTIONAL OUTBURST OF A
TIRED AND FRUSTRATED MAN. HE HAS NO INTENTION OF DOING ANY
SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE CANAL AND ALMOST CERTAINLY NEVER HAD ANY
SUCH INTENTION. WE ARE CERTAIN THAT THE NATIONAL GUARD
BRASS WILL BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THE SKULDUGGERY THEY WERE
SUPPOSEDLY PLANNING.

3. TORRIJOS IS SPEAKING FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION; HE IS
SHOWING HIS MACHISMO AND TRYING TO SELL A TREATY ABOUT WHICH
MOST PANAMANIAN ARE AMBIVALENT AT BEST. JORDEN

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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